



Aquatic Nuisance Species Program Update



Coast Guard Launches Shipboard Technology Evaluation Program (STEP)

The potential impacts of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) on our environment, food supply, economy, health and overall biodiversity are universally accepted as significant and growing. As one of many initiatives aimed at reducing the introduction of ANS into U.S. waters by ballast water, the U.S. Coast Guard has announced the beginning of a program aimed at facilitating the testing of experimental shipboard ballast water treatment systems.

The Shipboard Technology Evaluation Program (STEP) is intended to encourage research and development of effective shipboard ballast water treatment systems and create more options for foreign and domestic vessel owners seeking alternatives to ballast water exchanges.

Later this year, Coast Guard regulations will mandate that ships coming from outside U.S. waters take steps

to eliminate ANS from their ballast water, and future regulations may outline specific ANS ballast water discharge standards ships would have to comply with. Currently, however, the most effective known method of eliminating ANS from ballast water is conducting a mid-ocean exchange, a procedure that not all ships can safely or reasonably conduct.

Because technology developers and vessel owners have expressed a reluctance to invest the resources to install and operate experimental treatment systems that might not meet discharge standards mandated by future regulations, this program allows the Coast Guard to grant equivalencies to vessel owners that participate in the STEP.

The STEP is available to all vessels subject to the Coast Guard's Ballast Water Management regulations, 33 CFR 151 Subparts C and D.

Vessels regulated under the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline Authorization Act, (15 CFR 754.2(j)(1)(iii)) for oil exports, are not eligible for acceptance into the STEP.

More information on the Coast Guard's ballast water program and STEP application packages are available at: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mso/step.htm>.

Potential applicants should contact the Coast Guard Environmental Standards Division (G-MSO-4) staff at 202-267-2716 or EnvironmentalStandards@comdt.uscg.mil prior to submission, to discuss the criteria for acceptance, application process, and documentation requirements.

Applications for STEP will be reviewed beginning April 1, 2004.

International Ballast Water Management Treaty

The International Maritime Organization convened a diplomatic conference on February 9-13, 2004, to finalize and adopt the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments. The U.S. Coast Guard led a delegation representing six federal agencies and two industry advisors. Key objectives achieved by the U.S. delegation during negotiations were:

1. Retention of the sovereign right of a party to impose more stringent

measures, than the measures in the Convention, consistent with international law;

2. Implementation of the ballast water discharge standard on a schedule of fixed dates, beginning in 2009;

3. Phasing out of the practice of ballast water exchange;

4. Retention of the ability of port State to conduct ballast water sampling for the purpose of evaluating compliance; and

5. Provisions for the experimental testing of prototype ballast water treatment systems on operating vessels.

The ballast water discharge standard adopted at the conference was not the stringent standard proposed by the U.S. However, the standard adopted would still exceed the capabilities of current technology and when met, would reduce the number of invasions via ballast water.

The U.S. will evaluate the results of this Conference through the executive branch interagency process to determine the next steps with respect to ratification of this instrument.

Ballast Water Management for U.S. Waters

Established in 1993 and expanded in 1994, the regime of mandatory ballast water management emphasizing mid-ocean exchange for ships calling in the Great Lakes ecosystem remains in place, as directed by the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (NANPCA).

While in the process of being made mandatory through the regulatory process described in other sections of this summary, the Voluntary National Guidelines for the rest of the U.S., authorized under the National Invasive Species Act (NISA) and implemented in July 1999, continues for the time being.

The Proposed Rule for Mandatory Ballast Water Management for the rest of the nation appeared in the Federal Register on 30 July 2003. The comment period closed on 28 Oct 2003.

Key elements of the rule include a requirement for ships to maintain a BWM plan and the use of one of four alternatives for ballast water management: conduct a mid-ocean exchange; retain ballast water on board; use an approved ballast water treatment method; and/or discharge to an approved facility.

Vessels not able to comply with the requirement to manage ballast because of vessel safety or the inability to travel 200 NM from shore in order to conduct an exchange, may discharge the minimum amount of ballast necessary to conduct cargo operations.

NISA requires that this mandatory regime be based on the previously established voluntary guidelines and that enforcement include civil and criminal penalties.

The proposed rule may be found at: <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2003/03-19373.htm>

Calendar of Events

📅 **March 23, 2004, 9:30 am**
MEPC 51 Public Meeting and BWM Treaty Discussion
Coast Guard Headquarters
2100 Second Street, SW,
Room 2415
Washington, DC 20593
For More Information, please call: (202) 267-2716

📅 **April 1, 2004**
STEP Application Review Process Begins
STEP Website: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mso/step.htm>

📅 **May 19-21, 2004**
2nd Annual International Conference on Ballast Water Management, Singapore.
Conference Website:
www.ntu.edu.sg/iese/ballast2004

📅 **September 19-23, 2004**
13th Annual International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species, Ireland
Conference Website:
www.aquatic-invasive-species-conference.org

Electronic Reporting Encouraged

Beginning in January 2004, the U.S. Coast Guard Environmental Standards division and the National Ballast Information Clearinghouse (NBIC) embarked on a new campaign to encourage electronic submittal of BWM Report Forms. Electronic forms are available at the NBIC website (<http://invasions.si.edu/NBIC/bwform.html>)

To achieve this success a three pronged approach was used to disseminate the message: Coast Guard field units were given one-page flyers for distribution during boardings and industry attended conferences; a press

release was issued from U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters; and e-mails were sent directly from NBIC to hundreds of individual shipping agents and maritime industry representatives.

The results of this outreach were dramatic. NBIC experienced an immediate increase in the overall number of daily ballast water reports that coincided with a noticeable shift away from fax and postal reporting to the preferred electronic methods of reporting. The benefits include higher quality ballast water reporting data and receipt confirmation supplied to the ship.



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We are on the Web!

www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mso/bwm.htm